Peer review best practices and publishing policies
## Contents

**Introduction** 3
- Working with SAGE Publishing 3
- Using this guide 3
- About SAGE Publishing 3
- SAGE’s commitment to responsible publishing 4

**Your role as Editor** 6
- What you can expect from SAGE 6
- What SAGE expects from you 6
- Dignity at work 7

**Managing peer review** 8
- Your journal’s peer review policy 8
- Selecting reviewers 8
- Peer review best practice 9
- Rewarding reviewers 10
- Working with guest editors 10

**Editorial and publishing polices** 11
- Research ethics policies 11
- SAGE’s publishing policy 11
- Publication ethics and practices 12
- Correcting the academic record 14

**Important links and resources** 15
Introduction

As the Editor of a SAGE Publishing journal, you play a key role in the advancement of knowledge and understanding in your field. SAGE, as the world’s leading independent academic publisher, is a values-driven organisation, focused on the selection, shaping, curation and dissemination of high quality research outputs; your work as Editor is obviously central to what we do.

Our key philosophy is to ensure quality, transparency and integrity across our organization and in everything we publish. The publishing industry is an increasingly complex environment. Factors such as the pressure on researchers and academics to publish, gaps in training provided to early career researchers and differences in the understanding of what research integrity means can result in us sometimes having to deal with cases of misconduct in the peer review or publishing process. We want to ensure that you have the support and guidance you need to navigate any situations that may arise. Maintaining the reputation of our journals, and protecting the reputations of our Editors and publishing partners, is of the greatest importance to us.

We understand that different disciplines and fields of research may have different approaches to broad publishing issues but we wanted to provide some information here on SAGE’s general publishing and ethical policies and what we consider to be best practice in publishing.

SAGE is committed to:

- Maintaining the editorial independence of journal Editors.
- Supporting our Editors in running their journals ethically and transparently.
- Maintaining an accurate and transparent academic record, including publishing retractions and corrections when necessary.

Working with SAGE Publishing

Your Publishing Editor is responsible for managing your journal within SAGE. If you are ever unsure about who to contact at SAGE regarding a specific query, contact your Publishing Editor in the first instance. We believe journal publishing should be a partnership: between SAGE, our Editors, and the Societies and Associations on whose behalf we publish. We would like to work collaboratively with you in order to make the most of your expertise in your field and our experience as publishers. Please raise any concerns or problems you encounter – especially those related to potential legal or ethical matters – at the earliest opportunity so that we can work to resolve them together.

Using this guide

In this guide we set out some key aspects of working with SAGE as a journal Editor, advice on managing the peer review process in the most transparent and ethical way; information on our editorial and publishing policies and an overview of potential issues that might arise during the publication process, with guidance on how to handle these.

About SAGE Publishing

Since publishing our first journal in 1965, SAGE has grown to become the world’s largest independent academic journal publisher. SAGE is still led by its founder, Sara Miller-McCune, who has put provisions in place for SAGE to remain independent for at least 99 years after her lifetime.

SAGE believes passionately that engaged scholarship lies at the heart of a healthy society and that education is intrinsically valuable. This means playing a creative role in disseminating research and turning information into knowledge. The cornerstones of our publishing philosophy are creating and retaining great, long-term relationships; a sharp focus on our markets and their needs; and an ability to combine quality and innovation.

More information about our history, values and publishing programs can be found on our website.
SAGE’s commitment to responsible publishing

Publication ethics
SAGE, as a publisher member of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE), supports and abides by the COPE Core Practices. COPE has a wealth of information and resources that may be accessed on their website: publicationethics.org. If your journal is a member of COPE you should have log-in details that will allow you to access further useful resources, including e-learning modules, in the members section. SAGE strongly encourages all of our Editors to take advantage of COPE membership, so if your journal is not a member you can ask your Publishing Editor to arrange this for you.

SAGE is also an active member of STM, the leading global trade association for academic and professional publishers, and supports its International Ethical Principles for Scholarly Publication.

Legislative and regulatory compliance
It is of paramount importance that we at SAGE, and you as Editor, comply with all relevant laws in the performance of services for our journals e.g. maintaining the privacy of personal and confidential data and complying with anti-SPAM legislation. We may occasionally communicate with you regarding new developments in legislation and regulations that may be applicable to your work on the journal. Please contact your Publishing Editor at any time with any questions you may have about compliance.

SAGE and open access
SAGE has been actively engaged with the open access (OA) debate from very early on and is a member of the Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association (OASPA). All our OA publishing is held to the same very high standard as our traditional publishing activities.

SAGE supports both gold OA publication and green OA archiving:

- SAGE is the only major publisher that allows authors in any subscription journal to post the accepted version of their article on their own personal website, their department website or institutional repository with no embargo. Click here for more information about the details of green open access archiving allowed by SAGE
- SAGE Choice, our gold hybrid OA option, is offered on almost all of SAGE’s subscription journals and allows authors to make their published article freely available for an article processing charge of 3,000 USD/1,600 GBP for most journals. This is often paid by the author’s funder or institution and we have a number of centralized deals directly with universities.
- SAGE’s pure gold OA journals are supported by article processing charges, institutional sponsorship and/or SAGE. All the papers these journals publish are freely available to readers.

For the most up-to-date OA information, please visit the SAGE open access website: uk.sagepub.com/en-gb/eur/open-access-at-sage

If you have any questions about any aspect of open access publishing please contact your Publishing Editor.

Commercial sales
The Commercial Sales team at SAGE handles all non-subscription revenue derived from non-academic/industry sponsors who wish promote relevant products or educational materials. SAGE operates all transactions with the utmost regard to transparency and employs strict ethical processes to ensure that opportunities are handled with complete integrity. Society and/or editor approval is sought wherever necessary, and we uphold the principle that industry support must have no influence over editorial decisions regarding the selection of content in our journals. Commercial revenue streams for some journals include sales of article reprints, translated article reprints, print and online advertising, sponsorship of abstracts, supplements, local language editions and bulk subscriptions.

Reprints
Reprints of individual articles are often purchased by industry sponsors and distributed to potentially interested parties for educational and promotional purposes (e.g. at conferences). At SAGE, we ensure that editorial and advertising administration is clearly separated. We insist that articles are reprinted in unabridged form, entirely unchanged from the final published version (unless a correction is published). Reprint sales are only made after submission, review, acceptance and publication of articles, thereby not affecting editorial decision-making. Articles that may later be sold as reprints will have undergone the same peer review process as other submissions to the journal, and authors will have included all required statements and declarations on conflicts of interest, funding sources etc.
Supplements

Publishing sponsored supplements creates additional content, may capture articles in hot or new scientific areas and increases visibility for a journal. They can take many forms, from proceedings of meetings or industry satellite symposia, to groups of related papers that are often commissioned especially for the supplement and then printed and bound together. Supplements are also published online on SAGE Journals alongside the normal journal issues.

SAGE is often approached by companies wishing to create and sponsor a supplement for a particular journal. We make it very clear to all supplement sponsors that will not proceed without the explicit pre-approval of the journal editor. **All supplement content then needs to follow the same peer review process as regular articles and be held to the same standards as regular issues.** Whilst the editor may agree to appoint a guest editor to oversee the solicitation and review of supplements, ultimate decision-making on all papers rests with the editor.

Advertising

SAGE provides clear terms and conditions to advertisers, which stipulate that they must be authorized to sell all products and/or services advertised and to use any information or depiction in the ad material/advertising; that they have the right to use any trademarks, service marks or trade names depicted in the ad material/advertising; and that the ad material/advertising complies with all applicable laws and regulations in the country where it will be seen.

Statements made in advertising copy should be ethical and contain no direct or implied disparagement of another product. There should be no statements that are misleading, exaggerated or contrary to proven facts. All advertisements must clearly and prominently identify the advertiser, and recruitment ads must be nondiscriminatory and comply with all applicable laws and regulations.

**Acceptance and placement of advertising in our journals is entirely separate from the editorial content.** Ads that appear on the journal website adjacent to articles must display randomly, and cannot display based on the subject matter of the article.

**Advertising interests will not influence editorial decisions or editorial control of the journal.** Editors and societies are asked to approve new advertisements where necessary.
Your role as Editor

At SAGE we value very highly the role our Editors play. As Editor you will be driving your journal forward: ensuring that it is publishing high quality research, meeting the needs of its readership, and ensuring that it is responding to developments within the discipline or field of study. As your publisher, our aim is to support you and your Editorial Board by providing information and advice on all publishing matters, and especially any issues that could affect the quality and ethical standing of the journal.

SAGE Publishing is committed to being an inclusive organization where all individuals are treated equally with fairness and respect, regardless of age, disability, gender identity, marriage and partnership status, pregnancy and parental responsibilities, race, religion and belief, sex, or sexual orientation.

We trust that, as Editor, you will uphold these values, and we can support you in developing and implementing diversity policies. COPE has produced a podcast on diversity and inclusivity in peer review, which we recommend listening to.

What you can expect from SAGE

At SAGE we promise:

• Expert support from your Publishing Editor on all aspects of managing your journal.
• Advice on the strategic development of your journal: we will help you attract and publish high quality content. Visit the SAGE Editor Gateway for more information and useful resources to help you attract and publish the best papers in your journal.
• Support and advice on developing your Editorial Board: as Editor, it is important for you to develop an Editorial Board that reflects a range of subject expertise in the field, is gender balanced and is geographically and ethnically diverse. We are very happy to provide guidance should you need it, and of course will be happy to implement changes to your Editorial Board to ensure that it is truly representative, and all members work as a team to help you manage and develop the journal.
• Support and guidance on matters of publication policy and ethics; advice on how to deal with suspected publication misconduct.

If you are new to the role of Editor, you may find the COPE Short guide to ethical editing for new editors useful, as well as their Core Practices guidelines.

What SAGE expects from you

We ask our Editors to:

• Maintain quality, transparency and integrity in what is published: publish the best quality content possible for the journal, uphold the highest standards of peer review, and ensure that editorial decisions are taken following thorough assessment by suitable peers and revision where necessary.
• Maintain and promote consistent ethical policies for their journals.
• Oversee and act to enforce those policies as needed in a fair and consistent manner.
• Judge each submission on its own merits and not exclude authors based on their previous publication history.
• Ensure the confidentiality of the review process.
• Uphold the integrity of the peer review and publishing process and not i) require authors to cite the journal as a condition of publication, ii) suggest unnecessary self-citation.
• Ensure that reviewer comments sent back to authors are fair, unbiased and constructive and do not contain discriminatory or other offensive language. Remember that reviews can be edited before being returned to authors.
• If you are handling a manuscript and decide to provide a review of that manuscript yourself, ensure this is done transparently, as per COPE’s Ethical Guidelines for Peer Reviewers.
• Exercise the highest standards of personal integrity in their work as Editor of the journal, recognizing and planning for instances where they could have a competing interest or the appearance of a competing interest.
• Work with authors, reviewers, and Editorial Board members as necessary to ensure they are sufficiently advised regarding their journal's ethics and publishing policies and that the journal's stewardship on ethical matters is fair, unbiased and timely.
• Maintain an Editorial Board that reflects the various disciplines in the field and is international, gender balanced and ethnically diverse.

Working with your authors
We ask authors publishing in SAGE journals to:
• Read and abide by the journal’s manuscript submission guidelines. Please work with your Publishing Editor if you feel these are less than fully transparent, clear or accurate.
• Only submit papers that are original, their own work, and that have not been submitted concurrently to any other journal.
• Adhere to all research ethics guidelines of their discipline, particularly where human or animal subjects are involved, and include relevant declarations and statements confirming such. Details of what is required by your journal can be found in your submission guidelines.
• Ensure any real or apparent conflicting or competing interest is clearly stated on submission of their paper (this would include funding assistance).
• Ensure their data is true and not manipulated, that it is their own or that they have permission to use data reproduced in their paper.
• Where material is taken from other sources (including their own published writing) the source is clearly cited and that where appropriate permission is obtained.
• Ensure their work does not infringe on any rights of others, including privacy rights and intellectual property rights.
• Comply with the stated authorship criteria, including accurately representing the authorship of the paper, ensuring that all individuals credited as authors participated in the actual authorship of the work, that all who participated are credited and have given consent for publication, and that others are acknowledged appropriately.
• Contact the Editor regarding any changes in authorship that may be required either before or after publication. Please let your Publishing Editor know of any disputes around authorship. Details of our process for handling these can be found in the section on authorship disputes below.
• Contact the Editor to identify and correct any material errors upon discovery, whether prior or subsequent to publication of their work. If an author contacts you about making changes to their published article, please inform your Publishing Editor. More information on SAGE’s policy in terms of correcting the academic record can be found in the section on Publication ethics and practices below.
• SAGE requires the author as the rights holder to sign a Journal Contributor’s Publishing Agreement for all articles we publish. The corresponding author is asked to warrant that they are authorized to sign on behalf of themselves and, in the case of multi-authored papers, on behalf of all other authors. SAGE’s Journal Contributor’s Publishing Agreement is a licence agreement under which the author retains copyright in the work but grants SAGE the sole and exclusive right and licence to publish for the full legal term of copyright. Exceptions may exist where assignment of copyright is required or preferred by a proprietor other than SAGE. In this case copyright in the work will be assigned from the author to the society. The contributor agreement includes details of what the author is permitted to do with their article; this information can also be found within the copyright and permissions pages on the SAGE Journal Gateway. Please note that an article cannot be published in the journal without a contributor agreement. If we do not have the signed contributor’s publishing agreement at proof correction stage, we will not proceed to publication.

Working with your reviewers
We ask reviewers to:
• Provide their expert, objective assessment of the manuscript, and provide fair, unbiased, and constructive comments where possible.
• Return their referee report in the format requested and in a timely manner.
• Take responsibility for declaring any conflicts of interest that could affect the impartiality of their reviewing and decline to review where appropriate. If your journal uses ScholarOne Manuscripts, this is typically captured as part of the invitation to review.
• Maintain the confidentiality of the peer review process.
• Abide by COPE’s Ethical Guidelines for Peer Reviewers

Dignity at work
We strongly support dignity at work, and do not tolerate harassment or bullying of our staff or others. We consider harassment to be a form of conduct, speech or behavior which makes someone feel distressed, humiliated or threatened. It could take place in any setting and be conducted through any form, including electronic communication.

We consider bullying to be offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting conduct, speech or behavior which makes someone feel vulnerable, upset or threatened.

We trust that you uphold these principles and apply the same principles to working with Editorial Board members, authors and reviewers in your role as Editor.
Managing peer review

High quality peer review is at the heart of any academic journal. Whilst not infallible, and much-debated, it remains the mainstay of academic publication evaluation and is generally seen as an essential component of the scholarly communication process.

Sense About Science has produced a short guide to peer review that may be of interest to journal editors. Aimed at early career researchers, it explains how peer review works and outlines its various limitations. It also includes useful information on the different types of peer review. Download Peer Review: The nuts and bolts from their website.

Your journal’s peer review policy

Your journal’s peer review policy should be stated on your submission guidelines. It should be clear what type of peer review is used (e.g. single-blind, double-blind etc.) and if peer review varies depending on the article type (e.g. editorials and letters might not be sent for external review). It is also important to state if not all articles are sent for peer review, for example if they fall outside the journal’s scope or the editor deems them to be of insufficient quality to be sent out for external review. It is also good practice to include an indication of the likely timeframe for reaching decisions.

SAGE Language Services

Where an article looks scientifically promising but is poorly written, you may wish to advise authors to withdraw and re-submit after having their paper read by a colleague, particularly if English is not their first language. SAGE offers a fee-based English-language editing service for authors wishing to improve the language, presentation and formatting of their manuscripts. Visit SAGE Language Services for more information.

Selecting reviewers

Sourcing and securing the services of good reviewers is perhaps the most difficult aspect of managing the peer review process. It is important to maintain a sufficient pool of expert reviewers to enable submissions to be reviewed quickly and competently.

If your journal uses ScholarOne Manuscripts you will be able to keep track of reviewers’ areas of expertise by asking them to add keywords to their profile (if you use a pre-defined list of keywords it is a good idea to review these regularly to ensure they are current – ask your Publishing Editor if you need any advice on this), see the number of times they have been asked to review and, if you use ScholarOne’s rating system, see the speed and quality of their reviews.

Recommended reviewers should not be assigned to a paper if:
- The recommended reviewer is based at the same institution as any of the co-authors.
- The recommended reviewer is based at the funding body for the paper.
- The author has provided a personal (e.g. Gmail/Yahoo/Hotmail) email account for the recommended reviewer and an institutional email account cannot be found after performing a basic Google search (name, department and institution).

Advice on using recommended reviewers

The vast majority of authors and reviewers act with great integrity, and we are enormously indebted to them. However, there are those who seek to abuse the peer review process and provide false reviewers in order to positively influence editorial decisions on their paper. Given the very significant potential consequences, we would also like to help you in reducing your journal’s exposure to any unscrupulous practices that may exist. We suggest that you might consider the following steps to minimize risk to yourself and your journal, as follows:

- Watch out for extremely rapid review or reviews that recommend acceptance without providing sufficient detail or specific feedback.
- Watch out for duplicate reviews (i.e. identical reviews from two different reviewer identities for the same manuscript).
- Best practice would suggest that decisions should not be made solely on the basis of recommended reviewers, and that at least one reviewer sourced independently be used on each paper.

Tips for expanding your reviewer database

- Ask your Editorial Board to nominate colleagues who might be willing to review your journal as a reviewer.
- Check the reference list in the submitted paper to find authors of related work who could act as reviewers.
- Approach your own authors who have previously published papers in the same area, though please be aware of any potential conflicts of interest.
- Include early career researchers in your search who may be keen to start reviewing – supporting inexperienced reviewers will build loyalty and ensure better quality reviews.
- Search relevant databases and repositories e.g. Web of Science, Scopus, PubMed.

Recommended and opposed reviewers

Some journals offer authors the opportunity to suggest reviewers who they believe would be well-placed to comment on a manuscript (recommended) or highlight reviewers who they believe would not be suitable to review a paper (opposed).

Recommended reviewers should be experts in their fields and should be able to provide an objective assessment of the manuscript.
• Be particularly wary of using non-institutional email addresses that include numbers or additional letters, e.g. FIRSTNAME.SURNAME@address or INITIAL.SURNAME152@address
• Some individuals have verified ORCID accounts which can be found at www.orcid.org

If a recommended reviewer does not have an institutional email address, and you are concerned about a reviewer's authenticity or would like to perform a spot check, you might wish to follow the steps below:

- Search for the reviewer’s name and institution to find their institutional email address.
- Search for the reviewer’s email address in a search engine: a fake email address will not be registered anywhere and is unlikely to appear in results.
- Search for the reviewer’s publication history; is this email address used as their corresponding email for their publications? If not, contact the email address they have published with and use this when inviting them to review.

For reference, here is a list of internet country codes and top-level domains and domain extensions: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Internet_top-level_domains

Please remember that you are under no obligation to invite any recommended reviewers (or to avoid inviting any ‘non-preferred reviewer’) for any paper.

Peer review best practice

Turnaround times

Time to first decision can be a major factor for authors deciding where to submit their paper. The turnaround times considered to be competitive by authors will vary by discipline, but your Publishing Editor can work with you to find ways to optimize the time to first decision for your journal.

Reviewer feedback

Providing clear guidance to reviewers will improve the quality of their feedback, giving you greater support in making editorial decisions and providing a better service for your authors. Some journals will supply a form for reviewers to complete; others ask reviewers to comment on particular aspects of the paper. You might ask your reviewers to consider the following:

- Is the paper original?
- Is the paper clearly written?
- Is it methodologically sound; is the author’s theory or argument credible?
- Does the paper adhere to appropriate ethical guidelines?
- Are methods described clearly enough for others to replicate?
- Does it have results which are clearly presented and support the conclusions?
- Does it correctly reference previous relevant work?
- Does it make a sufficiently novel contribution to the field to warrant publication in your journal?
- If the paper is not suitable as submitted, is it worth developing?

Please visit the SAGE Reviewer Gateway to see the sort of things you should be expecting a reviewer to be considering in their review. Your Publishing Editor can work with you to optimize the reviewer feedback for your journal.

Reaching a final decision

In general, SAGE strongly recommends obtaining two independent external reviews that have addressed the paper in detail, though in practice the number of reviewers you use may vary depending on your field, the particular topic being discussed and the quality of the manuscript (i.e. a borderline manuscript may require a third – or fourth – opinion). Where two or more reviewers have made conflicting suggestions as to how the paper could be improved, you can guide the author as to which you consider to be most important. Whilst the peer review process can support your decision-making, you are not obliged to follow your reviewers’ recommendations.

That said, it is very important that the comments authors receive address the paper’s content in depth, providing constructive criticisms of the methodology, the research and its presentation, as well as any other suggestions or observations that might help them in carrying out a revision. If the reviews are insubstantial, focus solely on spelling/grammar or raise any other cause for concern, a further review should be sought.

The journal’s peer review policy is specified in the submission guidelines. For transparency and in light of increased public interest in the peer review process, Editors may wish to include provenance statements in published articles (e.g. “Provenance: not commissioned; externally peer reviewed by two reviewers”), especially if the peer review of a particular manuscript differs from the stated policy. Please liaise with your Publishing Editor if you wish to implement these statements.
For revised manuscripts, if the suggested changes are minor and if, on reviewing the revision against previous reviewer comments, you as the Editor feel that your own concerns and the concerns of the reviewers have been addressed to your satisfaction, it is not required that you send the revision back out to reviewers for comment. By only sending revisions back out to reviewers where you feel it is absolutely necessary you can help reduce reviewer fatigue and also keep turnaround times down to a minimum.

Communicating your final decision to reviewers is good practice and helps foster a sense of loyalty and community.

Rewarding reviewers

Reviewers make a significant contribution to the publishing process that often goes unrecognized. SAGE supports a range of initiatives that acknowledge reviewers' support:

- Many journals feature a ‘thank you to reviewers’ list in the final issue of the volume to give their reviewers some public recognition. Talk to your Publishing Editor if you would like to include a ‘thank you to reviewers’ in your journal.
- It is also worthwhile, when revising the composition of your Editorial Board, to ‘promote’ prolific reviewers to the Board to formally acknowledge their contribution.
- SAGE supports Publons, a third-party service that enables reviewers to claim credit for completed reviews. Anyone can create an account and submit details of their reviews, which Publons will independently verify. Ask your Publishing Editor if your journal is not currently integrated with Publons for this to be set up.
- In recognition of the invaluable role that reviewers play in the peer review process, SAGE offers all reviewers 60 days free access to all SAGE Journals as well as a discount of 25% on SAGE books each time they submit a review.
- More information and additional resources are available on the SAGE Reviewer Gateway

Working with guest editors

Publishing special/themed issues or supplements can enhance the profile of your journal, attract new authors and submissions, and potentially boost usage and citations. Many journal editors will arrange for a guest editor to handle the issue on their behalf. Below are some suggestions on managing special issues or supplements and working with guest editors.

- Appointing a guest editor: they should be a specialist in the chosen subject, and ideally will be sufficiently well-networked internationally to bring top authors to the journal. They should also be well-organized and have time available to lead the project through to completion.
- Developing a proposal: ask your guest editor to summarize the rationale for the issue, the approach they envisage taking and the areas they wish to cover. The proposal should ideally include a list of proposed paper topics and potential authors. You may like to consult your Editorial Board before agreeing to the proposal with the guest editor. The guest editor may wish to publish some of their own research in the special issue. Please make it clear to them papers they are authoring must be dealt with independently and be subject to the same peer review process as all other submissions to the journal.
- Roles and responsibilities: ensure your guest editor is aware that:
  - They are responsible for managing the peer review of articles submitted for the special issue in accordance with the journal’s and SAGE’s policies and processes.
  - They should ensure the complete and full peer review of all articles, reviewing peer reviewer comments, communicating necessary changes to the contributor and assessing final contributor changes before final decision making.
  - They will make final recommendations on decisions to you as journal Editor; you will make final decisions on the articles.
  - They will liaise with the SAGE Production department on sending accepted manuscripts for copyediting and typesetting. Your Production Editor can supply a production schedule for the special issue; the guest editor will need to manage the process according to the dates advised.
  - If they do not comply with the ethical and quality standards of the Journal, or the production schedule, this may result in the postponement or rejection of the special issue.
  - Contact your Publishing Editor at the start of the process and they can provide a written agreement (signed by SAGE and the guest editor) setting out roles and responsibilities in order to formalize the arrangement.
- Peer review: whilst articles in special issues are often commissioned, they must still be peer reviewed in accordance with your journal’s policy. Your submissions system must be used to handle guest-edited special issue submissions. Please let your Publishing Editor know about any forthcoming special issue titles before papers are solicited, so that they can set up a dedicated submission category (having the issue title available to select at submission stage makes it easier for the SAGE Production Editor to identify and batch these papers for publication).
Editorial and publishing polices

Research ethics policies

Editors and publishers have a key role to play in protecting the integrity of scientific and academic research. Misconduct can seriously harm the research community:

- It can cause a general loss of trust in journals and research.
- It can damage people’s careers, including those of innocent parties, for example co-authors who may not have been aware of any unethical behaviour of the submitting author and journal editors whose reputations may become tarnished by association.
- It can damage institutions’ reputations.
- It can corrupt the evidence base by perpetuating false data and findings.
- It is a waste of time, effort and funds.

There are also wider considerations:

- Public policy and practice may be based on fraudulent research.
- Patients might be at risk if recommendations based on fraudulent research are followed.
- Funding fraudulent research is a waste of taxpayers’ money.

SAGE requires authors to comply with all relevant ethical procedures set out by their institutions and funding bodies, and operate with complete transparency with regards to how the research was conducted, sources of funding, conflicts of interest, participant consent etc. These requirements are set out in full on the Editorial Policies page of the SAGE Journal Gateway and should also be included in your journal’s submission guidelines. Breaches in these ethics should be investigated by the institutions involved and the journal Editor should work with SAGE on taking the necessary steps to correct the academic record where necessary.

SAGE’s publishing policy

SAGE will not publish any article without receipt of an accompanying approved and signed SAGE Contributor Agreement prior to the publication deadline.

It is not our standard policy to publish material in our journals that has been previously published elsewhere, except in translation.

Previously published material

- Articles that have appeared in another journal (or a book) in the same, or substantially the same form, are considered to have been previously published. This applies whether the journal is print or online, whether it is open access or subscription-based.
- Articles that have appeared on a commercial website or on any public website not run by either the author and/or the author’s institution, and that appear in the same or in substantially the same form as submitted to the journal, are considered to have been previously published. This applies whether the website is paid for or free to access.
- Articles that were previously presented at conferences are unlikely to be identical to the version being presented for publication, but those that are the same or substantially the same and were published in the conference proceedings (whether online or in print) would be considered to have been previously published. If they were not published in the conference proceedings or posted on the conference website and only presented at the conference, then they would not be considered to have been previously published.

We will not generally republish material because: i) it potentially sends signals to our subscribers and readers that the journal is not attracting enough material of sufficient quality, ii) in an environment where most material is available electronically, previously published material tends to already be available so the need for it to be made ‘more accessible’ diminishes and iii) citation/ attribution considerations: republication of material means that the same article will exist with multiple bibliographic records, which can cause confusion and dilute citations.

Translations

In some cases it may be desirable to publish in English an important article that has previously been published in another language. This is acceptable under SAGE’s publication policy, at the discretion of the journal Editor. It should be made clear to the authors that they are responsible for clearing any permissions needed (and paying any relevant fees) to enable us to publish the translation both online and in print. We need a special contributor agreement to republish material in a SAGE journal, so please discuss this with your Publishing Editor who can supply the correct licence.
Publication ethics and practices

Editors should uphold the highest standards of academic publishing ethics to ensure the accuracy of the publication record and promote integrity in academia. Broadly, the ways in which ethics could be breached fall under the following categories:

- **Plagiarism:** presenting another person’s ideas as if they were his or her own, without proper acknowledgement or attribution.
- **Copyright infringement:** presenting another person’s original work of authorship – their expression of ideas – as if it were his or her own, without proper acknowledgement or attribution.
- **Duplicate (or redundant) publication:** copying and re-publishing his or her own work without reference to previous publication.
- **Data fabrication/falsification.**
- **Inappropriate attribution of authorship, which may lead to disputes (including individuals who have not contributed to an article or excluding authors who have contributed, lack of acknowledgment of guest or ghost authorship).**
- **Misconduct within the publication process (for example authors submitting manuscripts under fraudulent names or with fraudulent affiliations or reviewer misconduct during the peer review process).**

You may find this article published in Medico-Legal Journal (published by SAGE, and featured in one of COPE’s regular newsletters) of interest in describing some of these issues of publication ethics in more detail:

SAGE takes issues of copyright infringement, plagiarism or other breaches of best practice in publication very seriously. We seek to protect the rights of our authors and we always investigate claims of plagiarism or misuse of published articles. Equally, we seek to protect the reputation of the journal against malpractice. Submitted articles may be checked with duplication-checking software. Where an article, for example, is found to have plagiarized other work or included third-party copyright material without permission or with insufficient acknowledgement, or where the authorship of the article is contested, we reserve the right to take action including, but not limited to: publishing an erratum or corrigendum (correction); retracting the article; taking up the matter with the head of department or dean of the author’s institution and/or relevant academic bodies or societies; or taking appropriate legal action.

We follow COPE’s flowcharts to help us resolve issues of publication misconduct.

### Plagiarism and copyright infringement

We ask authors as part of the submission process to warrant that they are submitting their original work, that they hold the rights in the work, and that they have obtained and can supply all necessary permissions for the reproduction of any copyright works not owned by them. If your ScholarOne system includes iThenticate, you can use this to check the submission against papers published in journals using CrossRef (all major publishers use this reference-linking service). If you need help with using iThenticate please speak to your Publishing Editor.

If you suspect or are made aware of possible plagiarism, consult the relevant COPE flowchart and talk to your Publishing Editor.

### Duplicate publication

We also ask authors to warrant that they are submitting the work for first publication in the journal, that it is not being considered for publication elsewhere, and has not already been published elsewhere in the same or different languages. If material has been previously published it is not generally acceptable for publication in a SAGE journal, as per our publishing policy outlined above. However, there are certain circumstances where previously published material can be considered for publication:

- **Abstracts and posters presented at conferences:** though authors should inform the Editor and acknowledge the first source of publication. Articles that have been presented at a conference but not published by the conference organizers may also be considered. The author should confirm that he/she has not granted the conference organizers a licence to the work; if the author retains all the rights in the work the journal editor may consider the article for publication based on the fact that articles presented at a conference are unlikely to be the same or substantially the same version as that being accepted by the journal.
- **Raw data** (i.e. this does not include the arrangement or organisation of data) and clinical trials registries (i.e. without accompanying context). Please note that permission may still be required to re-use these materials.
- **Most dissertations and theses posted in institutional archives.** Please be aware that some dissertations will be composed of previously published peer reviewed articles. If the dissertation being presented for publication is the same or substantially the same as previously published work, it will not be suitable for a SAGE journal. You will need to determine whether the submission is sufficiently novel. We encourage our Editors to develop policies for their journals about what they consider to be acceptable practice in this regard and indicate this in their submission guidelines.

- **Working papers or versions of the paper posted on a pre-print server** (where appropriate for the discipline). Again, journals should have established policies about what they consider to be acceptable practice and should indicate this in their submission guidelines. As Editor
you retain editorial independence in regard to consideration of such papers. Authors should alert you when submitting their paper if they have posted it on a pre-print server. Authors should not post an updated version of their paper on the pre-print server while it is being peer reviewed for possible publication in the journal. If the article is accepted for publication, the author may re-use their work according to the journal’s self-archiving policy: SAGE’s standard self-archiving policy can be found on our Author Gateway.

In all cases the author should disclose any prior publication or distribution to the Editor and ensure appropriate attribution to the prior distribution and/or publication of the material.

Co-publication and secondary publication
In certain limited cases, namely where there is deemed to be a public health interest, an article may be jointly or simultaneously published in more than one journal with the agreement of the author and editors.

Secondary publication, for example of government or organizational guidelines, may be acceptable if there is a compelling reason to make the article available to your journal’s audience.

Please see the ICMJE Recommendations on Overlapping Publications for more guidance and information. If your journal is co-publishing an article, SAGE can prepare a special licence agreement to be signed by the relevant parties.

Articles using previously published data, images or results should clearly identify and give full reference to the original publication.

If you suspect or are made aware of duplicate or redundant publication in your journal, consult the relevant COPE flowchart and talk to your Publishing Editor.

Data fabrication and falsification
If you suspect or are made aware that data in a submitted or published article has been falsified, consult the relevant COPE flowchart and talk to your Publishing Editor.

Authorship disputes
We set out our policy on what constitutes authorship on the Editorial Policies page of the SAGE Journal Gateway. All journals must also include an authorship policy within their submission guidelines. We recommend that all contributors who do not meet the criteria for authorship should be listed in an Acknowledgements section.

Sometimes disputes around who should be included or excluded as authors can arise either during the submission process or after publication. We recommended considering the following to help manage authorship disputes:

- If your journal uses ScholarOne Manuscripts, the system can be set up so that all listed authors are copied in on correspondence.
- Require authors to supply statements outlining their specific contribution (e.g. X designed the study, Y collected data, X and Y wrote the paper and gave final approval for publication).
- Ask authors to supply ORCID IDs to remove ambiguity around their identity.
- Use SAGE’s Authorship Change Request Form (ask your Publishing Editor) to document any amendments to the author list.

If you would like to consider any of these initiatives for your journal, please talk to your Publishing Editor.

You may also find COPE’s guidelines on How to handle authorship disputes: a guide for new researchers useful. Please alert your Publishing Editor if any issues arise around authorship and check the relevant COPE flowchart.

Misconduct within the publication process
Peer review misconduct
In recent years a number of journal publishers, including SAGE, have been affected by attempts to defraud and circumvent the peer review system, specifically by abusing the preferred or recommended reviewer functionality. Whilst such instances relate to a very small proportion of the scholarly research system, the potential impact on a journal’s reputation is significant. If your journal uses recommended reviewers, please be alert to potential abuse by following the steps described in the above section on managing the peer review process.

If you suspect or are made aware of any misconduct within the publication process, talk to your Publishing Editor.

Citation manipulation
Attempts to manipulate Journal Impact Factors by deliberately increasing the number of self-citations are unethical. Some level of self-citation is to be expected but editors or reviewers should under no circumstances ask authors to cite their journal in their submitted paper unless it is relevant to the work being considered and will be useful to the journal’s readers. Please be aware that Thomson Reuters measures levels of self-citations and will exclude journals from their databases if they consider these levels to be excessive. We recommend reviewing Thomson Reuters’ journal selection process, which includes some information on self-citation.

In the same way, citation ‘stacking’ by ‘citation cartels’ (i.e. a group of editors or board members agreeing to add citations to each other’s journals) is unacceptable and should not be tolerated.
Correcting the academic record

In an effort to better serve our researchers, librarians, and others in the academic community, SAGE believes clarity in the publishing record is a critical component of information distribution. Recognizing a published article as a finalized ‘Version of Record’ establishes the expectation that it can be relied upon as accurate, complete, and citable. SAGE defines this Version of Record as the article paginated in a volume and issue or the initial article publication for open access journals (Open Access journals do not publish any additional versions such as paginated issue/volume versions).

Corrections prior to the Version of Record

Because articles can be read and cited as soon as they are published (including OnlineFirst publication), any changes thereafter could potentially impact those who read and cited the earlier version. SAGE provides authors with an opportunity to review article proofs prior to publication with the express goal of ensuring accuracy of the content. Publishing an erratum or corrigendum increases the likelihood readers will find out about the change and also explains the specifics of the change.

When an article is published OnlineFirst but not yet published in an issue, limited corrections may be made at the discretion of the journal and SAGE.

Version of Record

When an article is published in an issue (or an Open Access article is first published), it is considered the Version of Record. SAGE is committed to preserving the integrity and transparency of the Version of Record. If a significant error is discovered, SAGE may publish an erratum or corrigendum notice to alert all readers.

SAGE takes issues of copyright infringement, plagiarism and other breaches of best practice in publication very seriously. In the rare cases where a breach of publication ethics or copyright infringement are discovered, SAGE reserves the right to take appropriate action to correct the academic record, including but not limited to: publishing an erratum or corrigendum; publishing an expression of concern linked to the article; retracting the article and publishing an accompanying retraction notice; or removing an article for legal reasons and replacing the removed article with a notice.

Errata/corrigenda

In the case of a major error being discovered, we will attach an electronic erratum (to correct a mistake by us) or corrigendum notice (to correct a mistake by the author) detailing the correction to the online version of the article. This notice will also appear in the next available print issue. Where an author’s name has been misspelled, we will provide a duplicate bibliographic record on the online version of the journal, so that readers searching for the article will be able to find it using either spelling.

Expressions of Concern

An Expression of Concern may be published if, for example, we are made aware of possible research or publication misconduct by the authors and a lengthy investigation is likely. The COPE Retraction Guidelines outline a few more examples.

Retractions

As members of COPE, SAGE follows the COPE Retraction Guidelines. An article may be retracted under the following circumstances:

• There is clear evidence that the findings are unreliable, due to misconduct (e.g. fabrication of the data) or an honest error on the part of the author.
• The findings have previously been published elsewhere (i.e. cases of redundant publication).
• The findings or reporting of the findings have been plagiarized.
• The research has not been conducted in accordance with the relevant ethical procedures.

Removal

SAGE upholds the International Association of Scientific, Technical and Medical Publishers (STM) guidelines on the Preservation of the Objective Record of Science and we will not withdraw the article unless legally required to do so, i.e.:

• The privacy of a research subject has been inappropriately violated.
• The article contains errors that would result in a risk to the general public if followed.
• The article makes defamatory comments about others or their work.
Important links and resources

SAGE Journal Gateway homepage
uk.sagepub.com/en-gb/eur/resources-for-journal-authors-and-editors

SAGE Editor Gateway
uk.sagepub.com/en-gb/eur/page/journal-editor-gateway

SAGE Author Gateway
uk.sagepub.com/en-gb/eur/journal-author-gateway

SAGE Reviewer Gateway
uk.sagepub.com/en-gb/eur/journal-reviewer-gateway

SAGE Open Access
uk.sagepub.com/en-gb/eur/open-access-at-sage

Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE)
publicationethics.org

International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE)
www.icmje.org

Council of Science Editors
www.councilscienceeditors.org